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## About the Author

Mary Webster wanted to call her book, “What I wish I’d known before I got chickens”, but she thought that sounded negative.

Mary said that she has got a lot of enjoyment from her feathered friends.

“I want to share my experience and research with other people who have, or are thinking about getting their own chickens.”

“I hope to answer their questions and also give them information which they probably don’t realize they need!”

“I love helping to smooth the way for new owners and their first [birds](#) which otherwise could be a fairly bumpy ride.”

“There are tips for those that want just a couple of birds as [pets](#) and egg-providers and people whose ambitions are much greater.”

“The recent [health](#) scares for chickens and people that keep or consume them has generated a lot of worry. Some is unnecessary but there are also some potential risks that people are not giving enough attention.”

“I hope my book may help people to deal with the real problems and find the best sources for reliable information in the future.”

“People need to know that their chickens will demand some attention to be happy and productive. But, they are also great to watch while you sit and relax.”

“Most chicken owners are smiling more often than many of the other people I know!”

## Introduction

This book tries to give answers to your questions about chickens.

I also hope that you might find some information which you didn't know you needed.

It's based on my experience and the information which has been generously shared with me by friends and experts I've learned from.

If you have not had chickens before or have not had the results you were hoping for when you had some chickens before, please read the whole [book](#) right through to start with.

I have included information about the personal requirements which I think make [success](#) more likely, whatever activity and type of chicken you decide to get.

I've also explained some common assumptions about chickens which are not reliable.

I work through some of the factors which are most important when deciding which sort of chicken to get or whether chickens may not be your best choice at all!

If you have some experience with chickens, I still suggest that you read the whole book right through to start with.

Then, concentrate on those areas which are most useful to you.

Just make notes about those suggestions which are new to you and which you think have value. I have just covered the best [tips](#) I've learned and hope many of them will make your chicken adventure more successful and also more enjoyable.

## **Before You get ANY Chickens ... !**

This is a simple self-test which will help you decide if you have some of the most desirable qualities of successful chicken owners.

What chance is there of problems with other members of your family, [pets](#) or visitors?

If you get chickens, their presence will have some impact on the rest of your family. You may need their help at times and their understanding all the time. There will be some impact on them.

Also, carefully check your own attitude to chickens. You will need to give up some of the time you now use for other activities. You must do or get some other reliable person to do some tasks every day:

- Letting out the chickens from their shed each [morning](#).
- Check that they are all safely locked away each night, and
- They always have access to clean, fresh [water](#) and feed.

If this cannot be guaranteed, maybe another [hobby](#) might be a better fit.

Start by having a calm but thorough discussion with your partner about all aspects of the project.

Then, if they are on side with all that, discuss it with the rest of the [family](#).

Make sure that you get and understand each person's real views because some may just say what they think you want to hear.

Someone will have to give them some attention, from a minimum of half an hour, every day.

If that always falls on you, will you keep your enthusiasm and not let the chickens down?

You need to have a strong desire and a real [goal](#) to carry this type of project through.

Carefully check the costs of setting up and maintaining your flock.



## The Space Question

You will also need to be sure that you have enough space which no-one will want for some other purpose.

A general guide is to have about 10 square feet in their foraging area and about 4 square feet in the coop.



Remember that these estimates are recommended minimums. Your birds will thrive more if you can provide them with more space which will mean higher costs and impact on other aspects of your [home](#).

Their impact on the area they roam will be more destructive if it is small.

I suggest that you need at least double the area to prevent it becoming unusable over time.

Many owners use a much greater area and restrict their birds to a part of it for a week, then move them to another section so that first area can start to recover.

You will also probably need some space to relocate anything which had been in the area where you put the chickens' coop.

## Will Chickens Fit in?

This is an area that you need clear, accurate information about before you start to invest time and [money](#) in setting up your flock.

Many years ago, a large number of people kept a few fowls for eggs and the occasional Sunday dinner.

Land was relatively cheap and neighbors often had more interaction and understanding about the people who lived around them.

The first step is to check with the local authorities about the rules and restrictions.

Some areas of possible concern are health, zoning and public amenity (the possible impact on your neighbors’ ability to comfortably enjoy their [home](#) and surrounding areas).

You may have to be available for inspections about these various possible concerns. Once you have passed the inspections, you will have some evidence of independent approval of your methods and plans to show anyone who has doubts. This may help with anyone that thinks having poultry in the area may affect [property](#) values.

Common objections are about the noise smell and waste from the birds.

**Noise:** Roosters are widely banned but you don’t need them if you don’t want to produce chicks. But, hens also make some noise every day, particularly when they are upset or stressed. Try to find poultry owners who are already set up in the area to get advice and also use as good examples if anyone raises these objections.

**Health:** You might say that you will follow the current government [guidelines](#) on health and safety issues. You’ll keep your birds properly and securely housed. You will dispose of dead birds through incineration at an approved facility and your birds’ waste will be converted to compost in a well-maintained bin.

**Zoning:** There are usually minimum distances which your area must be from the other properties.

When you ask any poultry owners in your area for advice, some may help, but others may not want to talk because they didn’t get permits. That’s

very unwise. Apart from any penalties from being caught, their future activities would be closely monitored and their reputation in the community could suffer for years!

Check with the people on both sides of the street where you live and also the street behind your home.

Be prepared with positive information from reputable sources. Listen carefully to differing views and try to answer any questions in a calm, straight-forward way. Don't try to change anyone's [mind](#) – you need them to feel comfortable giving their views so that you know the strength of any opposition you face.

If you cannot answer any question, admit that you don't know and suggest that you will get the information for them within a couple of days.

If you get wide acceptance, you still need to consider the views of any who don't support your [idea](#). They can take action which might get your chickens banned later on when your [investment](#) cannot be recovered.

Another potential problem is when any of those properties change hands or there are changes in the local [administration](#).

This could change the situation significantly.

## Pros and Cons of Chickens

The benefits of having your own chickens are not all easily defined.

This section gives you some which are widely accepted as well as some of the most important factors which may reduce their appeal or practicality for you and your family.

### *The Cost*

Some people imagine that their own chicks will save them [money](#) but this is unlikely even when you are buying large quantities of organic free-range eggs for a large family.



The cost of a new coop, either commercial or one you build yourself, will be significant. Then, there are the other materials such as fencing, mesh, special feed and the feeders for both water and [food](#).

The cost of chicks, equipment and supplies will be fairly high but cheap is not recommended.

You will also need to connect with a veterinarian who has the experience with chickens. They usually charge higher fees than the general [pet](#) vet, but you need that special knowledge to keep your birds, family and anyone that eats the produce safe and healthy.

### *The Pros*

But, the dollar amount is just part of the story.

What you usually get for the money paid to a store is not similar to the eggs and meat provided by your own chickens.

Many store eggs contain substances which you really don't want to consume and have less of most of the valuable ones which your eggs have, including vitamins, omega-3, etcetera.

I've included a simple way to compare a store-bought egg with one from a domestic flock in another section. That will open your [eyes](#) to some significant advantages.

It is up to you how you value the benefits for yourself and your family. Your family will enjoy their interaction with the chickens and their [diet](#) will probably be healthier.

If you involve your children with the care of the flock, they will learn valuable habits and attitudes which will serve them well through the rest of their lives.

Many people like to watch fish in a tank for relaxation but I’ve found that watching some chickens forage and interact can be equally entertaining and you can do this outside in the sunshine with a cool drink in hand!

## Which Breed for You?

There are a bewildering variety of chicken breeds and also many cross-breeds which have come from attempts to add or increase certain desirable characteristics in the older types.

You must first decide what you want your chickens for.

The three main groups are those suitable for either egg production, meat production or those which are used for both of the above.

There are also many fancy varieties which may be mainly valued for their unique appearance.

The egg [group](#) have higher egg production rates, the meat breeds convert their food to good quality meat better and the dual-purpose can be successfully used for either type of production.

### *Make it Easy on Yourself*

The Breed-Gallery which is on the Poultry Club of Great Britain’s website and described in the Resources section of this [ebook](#), will show you most breeds with [pictures](#) and descriptions of characteristics such as size, type of feather etc. – Brilliant!

When you are inexperienced, try to limit your choice of breed to those varieties which are known to have these qualities as well:

Easy to handle so that you don’t lose much time because of the chickens’ behavior.

A well established breed so that information about its needs and any potential problems is easily available.

Popular with growers and cooks in your area. Some breeds fail this test simply because they aren’t suited for your climate conditions or other local factors.

With each variety, check if anyone is using the cross-bred varieties as well because they are usually intended to have better production values than the standard breeds they were developed from.

**Orpingtons** are a large dual-purpose bird, about 8 pounds (under 4 kilos) but easy to handle and good layers. They like people and tolerate cold

weather well.

**Rhode Island Red** are very popular as layers (eggs have brown shells). They are okay with confined spaces and very happy if allowed to range freely.

**White Leghorn:** These mid-sized chickens don't [mind](#) hot weather but their combs need special care if you have frosts and low temperatures. Their large, white eggs are very popular. Sometimes produced for meat, but require as much work as other breeds which produce more meat of similar quality.

## What to Start With?

There are three ways to start your new flock. You can:

1. Buy and incubate fertile eggs.
2. Buy and raise chicks
3. Buy started pullets.

Whatever you start with, your stock should be bought from reputable and helpful suppliers.

You want to get good [success](#) rates even though it's unrealistic to expect that all your eggs, chicks or pullets will grow and thrive every time.

### *Chicks*

Chicks need great care and the successful ones take months before they start to lay or produce a table-sized bird.



Local suppliers will probably supply smaller quantities than the ones you contact through the Internet. They are more likely to have some advice suitable for local conditions, so they can be your best choice, at least for your first few orders.

If you want them from a supplier who only [ships](#) larger quantities than you want, you might get some other chicken enthusiast to take part of the order.

If you can get “sexed females”, you will pay a bit more but avoid the problem of having to dispose of the roosters which are part of your order.

Roosters are good for protecting your hens from some predators but only essential if you want to start breeding chicks.

I would wait a while before even thinking about that option!

You will often find that paying a bit extra to buy from a farm store or breeder will have benefits that most variety stores can never match.

The staff will include someone who has knowledge of the tricks and traps of chicken raising.

The [stores](#) will have a greater variety of equipment and most will be



better quality.

Your chicks need constant care during those vital first few weeks.

Have everything prepared and double-check it all before they arrive.

You need to be available when the [box](#) is delivered. Get the delivery person to confirm the contents of the package and whether any chicks are hurt or dead.

They need a high security area for the first 6 weeks or so. Don't put them in a “good” area of your home.

They produce a lot of fine dust which will cover everything and be hard to remove. They are also a bit smelly. It's not really bad but you'd be more comfortable if it isn't in the main rooms.

I've covered the details of the brooder where they will stay until they are ready to join the main flock in another section.

Then, you can put them in a section of the main coop. Your [checks](#) might drop at that stage from 8 or more a day to about 5.

## **Bought and Fresh are like Night and Day**

The major reason that people start keeping chickens is to get their own eggs “fresh from the fowl”.

If you put a store-bought egg alongside one you’ve brought from your chicken coop, you might not see a lot of difference.

When you crack your hen’s egg, it will take a little more effort. You can usually break most eggs from a [store](#) without breaking the yolk – it’s probably a bit older.

There are usually higher levels of valuable vitamins A and E and more Omega-3 as well in yours too.

### ***Which is safer?***

It’s not easy to say that fresh or store eggs are safer. It depends on the care with which they’re produced and handled.

If you follow my suggestions and keep up-to-date with new information through the links in this book, you can make risk of infection of your eggs about as low as might occur in a well-run commercial operation, but no egg producer can eliminate the risk entirely.

The one advantage with the mass-produced eggs is that the cost to you is lower. Just realize that you are getting eggs but they’re not the same eggs.

I believe the extra cost and effort is easily worthwhile!

## **If Only I’d Known!**

This section has answers to some of the questions which I’ve been asked or wished I had the answers to before I got my first chicken.

I’ve given the best answers according to what I’ve learned. But, some future development or discovery may change the situation

For instance, viruses are continually evolving, just like we are. So, methods of preventing infection from them have to be changed and improved to deal with the new varieties.

### ***Less Eggs in Winter?***

Most of the flocks I know produce less eggs in the cold months. It is believed to be an effect of the birds having less access to sunlight than during summer.

You may get a few more eggs if you provide appropriate lighting for a couple of hours each day through the winter, but that may cost more for power than you want to pay.

And, if you aren’t affected too hard, you might consider it a way to give the hens some rest.

### ***How Do I get My Hens to Their Shed at Night?***

You will have to gather them only once or twice, when the situation and location is new to you and them. But, they will head to the shed without herding after that because they don’t see well at night and like perching in the relatively warm shed on a high roosting pole.

### ***Do I need a Rooster to get any Eggs?***

Hens will produce eggs even if there is not a rooster with them. But, the eggs will be [infertile](#).

This is important because many places around the country ban keeping a rooster in residential areas.

### ***Which Vet should I get for my chickens?***

You need a vet who has recent extensive experience with birds and chickens in particular. Many [pet](#) vets only see an occasional chicken, so the higher fee is always worth paying for specialized knowledge.

Many chicken owners have misdiagnosed some of the problems their birds have had. That can cause incorrect treatment and further spread of the disease or other problem. The amount which they save by getting a general vet or no vet at all will always be less than the bill for fixing the whole flock later on!

### ***Can my Chickens Just Roam my Garden?***

They’d love to but you would probably lose parts of some of your favorite plants. And, you could easily lose some of your chickens too!

You can let them roam areas of your [garden](#) when it is appropriate and



there is no risk that they will ruin your [tomatoes](#) (usually one peck per tomato!) or other crop.

They will feast on many types of bugs and some of that protein will be used to improve the eggs you get!.

Chicken manure is a “hot” manure and needs to age to become harmless to your plants.

If you let your chickens roam in your garden, protect your valuable plants and especially young, tasty seedling with mesh and protect your birds by avoiding the use of poisons of any kind, including slug and snail baits.

## Common Health Problems with Chickens

This is one of the most important factors in keeping chickens and using their eggs or meat.

Ask your vet to recommend medicines which you should keep on hand for dealing with relatively minor problems so that the general [health](#) of your flock is at the highest possible standard and your birds are better able to resist infection from any source.

When your birds and their environment is well-maintained, the risks are much less. But, constant attention is essential.

There is a high risk of errors which make problems worse when we try to diagnose conditions which we are unfamiliar with.

The results can be far worse than they could have been with the help of your bird vet.

Here are some important and fairly common problems your chickens could get.

### *Pasting Up*

This is fairly easy to diagnose. The chick's feces start to dry and build up around and then over the vent. After a short time, the dried matter stops any more feces being dropped.

Quick action is needed to save the chick's life and spare it extreme discomfort.

Gently press a dampened paper towel against the dried matter. That will often loosen the material enough for you to brush it away.

If the material is strongly fastened, you can gently poke the chick's rear into some slightly warm water.

Any bird in this condition will be letting you know about the [pain](#) it is having. Keep dabbing or dipping the area until you get the material to soften the dropping away.

If some matter is softer than other bits, you may be able to dislodge the hard matter very carefully with a toothpick. This needs a steady [hand](#) and gentle touch.

Older birds can suffer **respiratory infections** or be affected by dust in their living area.

These symptoms may be caused by a number of infections including a type of bronchitis. Separate the affected birds from the apparently healthy ones to reduce the chance of cross infection and call your vet for a better diagnosis.

### ***Feather loss***

**This** may be widespread or only in certain areas.

### ***Lice***

This pest will cause it to occur over most areas of a bird. These pests can be treated with pyrethrum powder but get your vet to show you how to apply it safely to your birds.

The chicks common custom of dust-bathing is also effective to some degree.

These pests can be transmitted between birds. This is one of many good reasons to isolate new birds for a couple of weeks before putting them with your other birds and making sure that no wild birds can mix with yours.

Other causes of feather loss are poor condition, [stress](#), aggressive or romantic attention from other birds.

Give the affected bird some time in isolation or look for the bird(s) which are doing the picking and isolate them for a couple of hours.

## Safety Risks with Chickens

**Salmonella** is dangerous and it evolves into new varieties over time.

Chicks may have salmonella in their droppings which transfers to all areas of their [body](#) when they lay down.

Salmonella is carried by some flies and many rodents including [rats](#) and mice.

Wild birds will spread the disease to domestic flocks and contaminate plants which may be eaten later by your birds.

Infected hens may not show any obvious signs, but pass it to their eggs. People that eat the eggs or the birds will be affected seriously.

The [disease](#) reduces the strength of shells on the eggs from infected birds which can allow easier infection by other diseases such as Listeria as well!

Salmonella is an especially serious danger to people with reduced immunity. It is a “smart” virus that constantly improves its means of distribution. It used to be blocked by the internal membrane from infecting the yolk of good eggs. But, later strains are capable of getting through the membrane.

Always discard eggs with cracked or holed shells, however minor the damage may seem. Salmonella and other diseases can get through any crack or breach and the risk is high!

Testing is expensive but must be done if your vet advises it for public health safety.

Vaccines are used on commercial flocks but not widely available otherwise.

### ***Children and Chicks***

Children are very attracted to small chicks; they’re cute and make a cute noise. But, they should only be allowed near chicks under close supervision by someone that understands the serious risks.

Chicks may have a salmonella [infection](#) which can be spread through their droppings. Also, they often lie or even roll on the floor of their [pen](#) and the infection can be spread anywhere on their body.

Don't let your children touch the chicks.

Always make sure they wash their hands after being near them.

The statistics show that many children suffer serious diarrhea after they have contact with chicks. This can be dangerous for children of any age and also anyone whose immune system is compromised or who are [pregnant](#).



## Feeding Your Chickens

When you are raising chicks, the wisest course is to find a reliable supplier and buy complete mixtures for the various stages of the chicks’ growth cycle.

Ask other growers and your bird vet for specific advice based on their experience. Be aware that most mixtures vary in their composition, so always read the label and follow directions closely.

**Starter feed:** This is designed for chicks with higher levels of protein to assist the chicks’ rapid growth.

Most mixtures include some medicines and maybe [vitamins](#). You might want to get your vet’s advice about any which might not suit your particular breed of chicks.

**Grower Mix:** This is started at about nine weeks of age. It usually also has significant levels of protein. It doesn’t have the chick medicine.

**Layer Mix:** This is usually introduced about the time when the hens start to lay eggs. There is calcium in these mixes which the birds use to produce stronger shells.

Avoid any feed which has medicine in it for your layers unless advised by your vet. Some medicines may affect the taste of the eggs produced by the hens which are getting the medicine.

**Grit:** This is essential because your birds use it to grind their [food](#) in the crop before it can be digested.

We are lucky and have teeth instead!

Grit must always be available from a container in their quarters. Clean out any which is fouled to avoid them swallowing the bad material when they get more grit.

Scratch: This is a mix of various grains which is best used as a treat for your birds. Don’t put it out so they can always get it. If you do, they will eat it and eat less of the more nutritious mixture which is their regular food. This can lead to them losing condition and even seriously affect their [health](#) if you let it continue!

But, it is also something you might give them a small amount of when you shut them up during really cold weather.

**Shells:** Oyster shells can be used to provide necessary extra calcium if your birds don't get enough from the regular mixture you give them.

**Corn:** Corn is a part of many mixtures though some people believe it should only be fed in small quantities and not all the time.

Your birds will like it but you might want to supply broken kernels if you have smaller varieties like bantams so they can handle it more easily.

## Plants Your Chickens will *Love*!

Here are some plants which people recommend for their chickens.

You must take full responsibility when using these plants because they may be contaminated by chemicals or wild birds or other creatures.

I have not tried all of them so you should check with the owner of the [property](#) for details of the plants' history and with other flock owners about their results with that type of plant in your area first.

Be careful that you do not let your birds eat any plant material which has been sprayed with any poisons. Some chemicals can stay for years inside plants without the plant being affected, but those chemicals may kill or injure your birds. So, make sure that you only use plants from areas which you know are poison-free and not subject to drift from elsewhere.

Remove any plants which are damaged before letting your birds into the area. Wild birds may carry [diseases](#) which are more dangerous from your pampered birds. Damaged fruit may become infected at the damaged area. That may spread through the whole [fruit](#) and even through that plant.

**Catmint** has some ability to deter some lice, ticks and other bugs. Plant it around the outside of your coop.

**Nasturtium** is a favorite snack with several types of birds. It has a sack of nectar which they will bite off and is also supposed to have some insect repellent properties.

**Dandelions** are liked by some chickens and other birds.

## Keep Chickens Away!

There are also several types of plants which may cause harm to your chicks.

These are the most common which I have seen warnings about:

Azalea	Boxwood	Foxglove
Hydrangea	Iris	Oleander.
Potato Sprouts	Rhubarb	St Johns Wort    Sweet Pea

## **Help your Chickens Handle Cold Weather**

Select breeds with cold weather credentials. Those with large wattles and combs will have more trouble but most chicks will adapt to some extent over time.

Draughts are a bigger problem than low temperatures.

Remember gaps in the housing may provide entry for small predators.

Heating their quarters will be expensive. It will reduce their ability to adapt to the normal low temperatures of your winter. Then, you could suffer severe losses if the power drops out for several hours which seems to happen almost everywhere at some time.

Another risk is that their [water](#) supply might freeze.

Chickens, like most birds, depend on having easy access to water through the day. Check at least twice a day that they can get a drink and keep an [eye](#) on the forecast temperatures.

## Handling your Birds

Handling your chickens safely for both you and the birds is something you need to learn.

You must show confidence or some chickens will be very hard to hold securely.

Spread your stronger hand over the middle of the back. Then, use separate fingers to hold their wings gently against the body.

Put the base of your other hand under their rump to support them as you lift.

Hold their legs against their body. With a little experience, as you get some [confidence](#), and the birds will become used to you handling them and then rest comfortably against your [body](#).

Use your arm to press the bird gently against your side.

Then, you can use your main hand to do what the bird needs done.

## Chickens and Other Pets

Chickens should never be allowed in your home because of the risk to your furnishings and health. Very young [children](#) can be at special risk.

### *Other Pets*

Chickens can co-exist with most other [animals](#) in town or on a rural block.

But, some may be injured or even eaten by your larger chickens or pose a risk to them.

To avoid the [heartache](#) from any “accidents”, keep all small pets away from your chickens.

Many people forget or not even realize that chickens are omnivores, they eat meat as well as plants. That’s why they can be helpful in your [garden](#). Some have even eaten [rats](#) and other creatures of similar size!

Obviously, you may have problems with your dog if it isn't used to chickens. It could be aggressive and injure or even kill some.

But, most dogs can be trained to leave them alone and protect them from their real enemies. Give the [dog](#) a chance and closely supervise it for a while. Don't let your dog near your chickens until you're comfortable that it will be safe to do so.

[Cats](#) are usually okay but large, confident cats may try to “play” with your chickens. Roosters may become protective and provoke a reaction from your cat. Some hens, especially any which are broody may retaliate, or try to!

All cats should definitely be kept away from any chicks or there could be a chance of [injury](#). No cat should be near chicks or very small chickens, even if they are usually not aggressive.

## Housing Your Flock

All chickens need a secure enclosure.

They have many predators, including some that are attracted by the extra feed which they scatter around.

Most breeds can handle fairly low temperatures but all draughts must be prevented.

Chickens prefer to roost on perches where they are available. This gives them some protection and isolation from the floor of their pen.

Provide wooden roosting perches of sufficient length for all your birds. The thickness should be at least one inch (2.5 cm). If you need more than one roosting pole, always set each pole so that droppings from birds on the higher poles do not land on the lower birds through the sleeping period.

Make sure that each perch is thick enough for the birds' claws to get a good grip on it. Otherwise, the [birds](#) will feel insecure and they may fall or develop serious problems in their legs.

[Wood](#) is usually preferred for the structure, with [metal](#) reinforcing edges to stop water, vermin and other pests getting in.

If you build your own structure, you can use second-hand materials but should not compromise at all on quality.

If you leave any gaps or have inferior materials, the various predators will find them!

Security must be 100%.

Attacks may come through any part of the structure, from the roof to the [floor](#) or even through the pipes that let excess water out.

Use quality mesh, no more than one inch (2.5 cm) wide.

Dig your fences at least 6 inches (15 cm) deep on all sides and turn the mesh outward at the bottom. Then, pack the earth down on the edges.

## Equipment

There are a number of items which are essential for successfully maintaining your flock and a much greater number of items which might be “nice to have.”

These items are the essentials. Some can be made from items you have on hand. With other items, the commercial versions are likely to be much better to use.

Chicks need to be protected and watched. The area where you keep them will be the target of every predator in your area.

As well as that outer level of protection, they need an enclosure which will keep them inside a small area which can be easily monitored and checked regularly.

**Brooder:** This can be made from a strong cardboard [box](#), or plastic or wooden boards. Of course, you can buy a wide range of commercial brooders if your budget allows. Make sure there are holes in the sides to allow air circulation without letting the chicks get out or be subject to draughts.

You need about 2 square feet (60 cm) per chick to allow them space to move around and to allow for their fairly rapid growth rate. One foot (30 cm) is a good minimum height.

**Bedding:** This needs to be thick, gentle on the chicks and able to draw liquid waste away from the surface. Most growers have a favorite type so check with any you know in your area. I think pine shavings are a good choice if they are easy to obtain in your area and they are easy to manage.

Avoid newspaper. The printed stuff outside of the U.K. may have poison in the ink. All printed newspaper ink may transfer to the chicks’ bodies and cause problems. The chicks will tend to slide about and easily damage their fragile legs. Many use paper towels but they are fairly costly and need frequent changing.

**Waterer:** The ones produced for chicks will best serve their needs. “Making do” with items you have around your home probably will cause



problems because of the chicks’ behavior and needs. Keeping the water clean and safe means frequent cleaning and changing the water. The device needs to be on the floor when there are any one-week-or-less chicks there. After that, fix it slightly higher to reduce the potential risk of fouling or drowning.

For older birds, the commercial watering devices are also a good investment. Fix them at least a few inches off the floor of their coop.

This will reduce the amount of waste and other rubbish which will get into the device but they all need at least daily inspection and regular [cleaning](#) to avoid health problems.

**Infrared Globe:** If you are incubating eggs to start or build your flock, you will need a heat source in the brooder.

Get a 250 watt infrared globe and suspend it above the center of your brooder.

You will need to experiment with the height you set the [bulb](#) at to ensure that the chicks stay warm but don’t get too hot. If they scatter to the edge of the brooder, the temperature may not be comfortable for them. If they are all in a huddle under the globe, lower it slightly to increase the temperature.

White lights can produce too much glare for the chicks’ comfort and reduce the amount of [sleep](#) they get when they need it most.

A white light source may also not produce enough warmth for their needs.

## Resources

*U.S.A.*

### **American Poultry Association**

[www.amerpoultryassn.com](http://www.amerpoultryassn.com)

### **Henderson's Chicken Breed Chart**

<http://www.ithaca.edu/staff/jhenderson/chickens/chickens.html>

A chart showing information about more than 60 breeds with the compiler's views on their relative merits!

### **Society for the Preservation of Poultry Antiquities**

<http://www.feathersite.com/Poultry/SPPA/SPPA.html>

The USDA has a free [disease](#)-testing service. To find out more, call 1-866-536-7593, or visit their website at

[www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/birdbiosecurity](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/birdbiosecurity).

. Visit [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov) for the most up-to-date information ON Serious viruses such as Bird Flu.

### **Bui Resources**

- Ohio State University (Plywood step by step) [Go Now](#)
- From Mississippi State (Styrofoam) [Go Now](#)
- From University of Tennessee (Old refrigerator) [Go Now](#)
- University of Nebraska (Plywood) [Go Now](#)
- From a waterbed heater and an old fridge [Go Now](#)
- The "Matilda" styrofoam incubator [Go Now](#)
- From Feathersite [Go Now](#)

## ***U.K.***

### ***Choose Your Chicken***

<http://www.poultryclub.org/breed-gallery/>

The Poultry Club of Great Britain’s picture gallery of Chickens.

It also lists geese, ducks and turkeys in separate sections.

This is a great resource as it describes each breed by its physical characteristics.

### **Registering Your flock.**

<https://www.gov.uk/poultry-farms-general-regulations#how-to-register-your-birds-on-the-great-britain-poultry-register>

“You must register if you keep more than 50 poultry of any kind. If you have less, Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) still recommends it to help manage any potential disease outbreak by targeting resources where they are needed most.”

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2235487/Health-risk-poultry-farms-garden-flocks.html> Report in Daily Mirror Newspaper.

Report about poor education of some U.K. poultry owners not following best practices and potentially presenting higher risk to all poultry owners in the country!

Original report may be downloaded from

## ***Australia***

### **The Poultry Hub**

<http://www.poultryhub.org/>

The Poultry Cooperative Research Centre (<http://www.poultrycrc.com.au/>) developed the Poultry Hub as a resource designed for spreading information of interest to anyone involved or interested in commercial poultry.

## **Ready to Fly**

At this point, you should have a much better idea of what type of chickens you will get and how you can start on the path to success and enjoyment worthy of your efforts.

I hope that my book has given you a better understanding of what you need and can expect from your first and subsequent flocks.

Although some disappointments are likely, I am sure you can successfully reach your [goal](#) and have happy chickens and a healthier you!

***Mary Webster***

[Another eBookWholesaler Publication](#)